

Remarks of Stephanie Wanzer  
Special Educator  
Cooperative Educational Services

Before the Education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24, Section 28  
Teacher Certification Requirements

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Stephanie Wanzer, and I am a special education teacher in Trumbull at Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.). I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 28. I hold a provisional certificate in special education. Through Southern Connecticut State University I have acquired my teaching certificate in Special Education, a Master of Science in Special Education, and a Sixth Year in Leadership as well. I have worked at C.E.S. for the past eighteen years in the Developmental Learning Center working with students with autism, intellectual disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders, and emotional disabilities. I began working in a position as an aide in a classroom. Through the years I have held many positions at C.E.S.; at this time I am a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom at a Regional Education Servicing Center in Fairfield County. I have learned a great deal from my experiences at C.E.S. which have helped me become a stronger teacher. I also feel that the Master of Science degree I have earned has also allowed me to broaden my expertise in the special education field. This is because at Southern you are allowed to choose an area that you feel best compliments the area you work in. I received my degree in interdisciplinary studies with George Olshin. I worked towards both, teaching certificate and masters degree, at the same time.

During my studies, I was able to take the areas of child abuse, clinical practices in intellectual disabilities, grant writing, and planning for individuals with special needs. In the field I work in we individualize for all students. We also encounter those topics which are not always easy to handle such as child abuse in special education. My masters programming allowed me more in-depth understanding in relating and assisting the next steps for students who are sexually abused. This knowledge has been instrumental with working with special education students. The course work also allowed me to use the Green Chimneys Longitudinal Assessment Scales (GLAS) in order to program for a particularly challenging student. I learned from this exercise how important looking at a particular student in many different lenses can be in providing for the best possible outcomes for students with disabilities. This holistic approach has made me a more well-rounded and insightful educator. The mechanics of grant writing will be a skill that can only assist in these troubling economic times and allow me to be a greater asset to my school district in the future. These are a few examples of why the master's degree allows teachers to continue to be a strong asset in the classroom and school community. I lead in my classroom every day with dedication to the students and families at C.E.S. High-quality

teachers are the greatest asset in public education. We need to take advantage of their experience in the classroom and their knowledge of how to help students succeed. I would like to urge the committee to connect teacher licensing to teacher training and advanced coursework beyond a bachelor's degree in order to be responsive to the real and changing needs of student learners. Thank you.